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SUBJECT: VIRTUAL PRESENCE PROGRAM (VPP) IN SEVILLE/ANDALUSIA INITIATED

¶11. (SBU) Summary: Embassy Madrid has decided to initiate Virtual Presence Programs (VPP) for Andalusia and the Basque country on a one year trial basis. Charge initiated the Andalusia VPP concept while visiting Seville November 30 - December 1. He hosted a well attended reception for the U.S. Davis Cup tennis team and local officials. The tennis team is captained by Patrick McEnroe and includes the world number two ranked player: Andy Roddick. The U.S. team will compete with the Spanish team in the Davis Cup final in Seville December 3-5. Charge's visit generated extensive press coverage - he got the message out that while we have differences, Spain and the U.S. continue to work together on important issues, including security matters. Charge met with Autonomous Community of Andalusia President Manuel Chavez Gonzalez, a nationally influential PSOE stalwart. (Note: In Spain "Autonomous Communities" are roughly equivalent to states in the U.S., although Spain is formally still a unitary country.) Chavez reiterated the PSOE position that Spain wants to be "useful", for instance in the Middle East, to the U.S., although he prefaced his remarks by saying he does not speak for the GOS. Charge also met with a representative for the Mayor of Seville. Both Chavez and the Mayor's representative welcomed the prospect of a continuing dialogue with the U.S. Embassy through the Virtual Presence Program. End Summary

WHY VIRTUAL PRESENCE IN ANDALUSIA?

¶12. (U) We closed our Consulate General in Seville fifteen years ago, but we still maintain a two person Consular Agency in Seville. There are numerous reasons to make an effort to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the regional and city governments. Andalusia is big with seven million out of Spain's 40 million inhabitants. The PSOE leadership is nationally influential. Andalusia is home to many American retirees and hosts many tourists. We have two important military bases there. See para. 3 for a non-exhaustive list of our ongoing interests and activities in Andalusia. Our idea is to use this list as a basis for developing additional programs and activities serving Mission Program Plan (MPP) goals. Trade Policy Officer Carl Schonander is the Embassy's Andalusia Virtual Program Coordinator. He will be liaising on an ongoing basis with regional and city officials regarding ways we might expand activities in and with Andalusia.

UNITED STATES PRESENCE/ACTIVITIES IN SEVILLE AND ANDALUSIA

¶13. (U)

- Consular Agency to remain.
- Rota and Moron bases.
- Container Security Initiative in Algeciras.
- U.S.-Spain Council 10th Annual Meeting probably in February, 2005 (chaired by Senator Chris Dodd and Antonio Garrigues).
- U.S. Embassy to support Seville June 2005 conference on academic exchanges called "Building Bridges"; sponsor speakers for Universidad de Jaen Spring 2005 Spanish Association of American Studies biannual program; assist Malaga Centro de Arte Contemporaneo put together an exhibit by American artist Alex Katz in February-June ¶2005.
- Researchers from Andalusia have received Fulbright scholarships; some U.S. Fulbright scholars perform research in Andalusia.
- International Visitor Program: Intensified effort to find qualified candidates from Andalusia.
- United States Commercial Service (USCS)/Confederacion Empresarios Andaluses (CEA)

seminar in 2005.

-- U.S. Embassy Environment, Science and Technology Officer to explore possibility of greater Science & Technology cooperation with Andalusia, as well as greater Andalusian presence in the Fulbright grant process.

-- Annual visit by American Consul General.

-- Political Section visits in 2005 especially oriented towards identifying and providing counterterrorism training to members of local law enforcement agencies.

-- Seville maintains a sister city relationship with Kansas City.

NOVEMBER 30 RECEPTION A SUCCESS

¶14. (U) The first Embassy-hosted reception in Seville in four years proved successful with the Mayor in attendance and top lieutenants to the President of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia. The hook of the U.S. Davis Cup tennis team's presence generated excitement. The Davis Cup final, a three day event, has attracted sold out crowds in Seville and is one of the most important sporting events the city has hosted. The U.S. reception attracted national, regional, local, and TV media. Charge's subsequent TV and press interviews also received widespread positive coverage.

MEETING WITH PRESIDENT OF ANDALUSIA AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY MANUEL CHAVEZ GONZALEZ

¶15. (SBU) Chavez is a heavyweight within the PSOE. Had he been willing to leave Andalusia, he would have been a strong contender for the PSOE leadership. He is nationally influential and travels frequently in Spain and abroad. Chavez was receptive to closer contacts with the Embassy in Madrid. He was very interested in the upcoming U.S.-Spain Council meeting, provisionally scheduled for February 2005 in Seville. He reiterated the PSOE line that Spain wants to be "useful" to the U.S., although he prefaced his remarks by saying that he does not speak for the GOS. He said that Iraq was an "accident" in U.S.-Spanish relations and that the two countries should return to "normality". Chavez said he grew up with Americans from the military bases in Andalusia. He noted that he had been selected twice for International Visitor programs. The first time he could not go because the Franco government stopped him. The second time he went in the late seventies, and he said it had been a good experience. Chavez opined that Catalonia was medium-term a more significant problem for Spain's constitutional future than the Basque country despite the terrorism problem in the latter. He said the Catalonia PSOE was more nationalist than socialist, whereas the Basque PSOE was more socialist than nationalist. (Comment: A fundamental problem for leaders of autonomous communities like Andalusia that are comfortable with a Spanish identity is that if Catalonia and the Basque country demand and receive more powers, the other communities often feel duty-bound to demand the same concessions from the central government. There is resistance in Spain to the idea that some communities should effectively be more equal than others such as Quebec is in the Canadian Confederation and Scotland in the United Kingdom.) Chavez mentioned that he is currently reading Bob Woodward's "Plan of Attack", and that he found the book's description of decisionmaking at the highest level of the USG "interesting".

MEETING WITH SEVILLE ADJUNCT PRESIDENT FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ALFONSO SEOANE YARZA

¶16. (U) Seoane mentioned that he had just returned from a trip to Tangiers. He said that Spanish businesses were potentially interested in investing in Morocco to take advantage of the U.S.-Morocco FTA. He noted that some Spanish businesses really were suffering from the Euro-Dollar exchange rate, and that they needed to do everything possible to increase competitiveness. Seoane reiterated that the City of Seville would like to see the U.S. use the Consular Agency building more often. Charge noted that the building was too large for U.S. needs, and that we would probably return to the building to the City when our lease expires in February 2006, although a final USG decision has not been made. Seoane was very interested in expanding student exchange programs. He also mentioned that baseball was becoming more popular, and that he would like to try to arrange a game

between an Andalusian team and a team from the Rota naval base. Seoane mentioned that Seville's top female soccer player (Seville plays in the A feminine league) is an American called Jennifer Talavera - she gets a lot of attention in the local press.

COMMENT

¶7. (U) Charge's trip to Seville proved a good launching pad for the Virtual Presence Program in Andalusia.

MANZANARES